

The Neutrality Act . . .

Cuba Situation Necessitates Repeal

By Roscoe Drummond

SAN FRANCISCO—There is no doubt in my mind that public opinion throughout the country is uncomfortable with President Kennedy's present response to the Soviet occupation of Cuba.

This fact emerges sharply and visibly in the course of a reporting trip from Massachusetts to California. Cuba is restlessly on the public mind. It explodes into question and comment without any stimulation whatever. The feeling is that the Administration's policy is unclear, uncertain, and more timid than the American people relish.

I'm not talking about the minority who appear to think that they would like to see the marines land in Havana tomorrow. There are a few of those, but that is not the dominant opinion. The opinions which I encounter most uniformly are these:

MOST PEOPLE want the President to recognize that the Soviet penetration of the Western Hemisphere is a clear and present danger which has to be faced now, not put off to the future.

I believe that there is one immediate, concrete, and useful step which should be taken by the President and Congress, and which would do two things: Show that the U. S. is not placidly going to accept the Khrushchev-Castro dictatorship and open the way to help lift it from the backs of the Cuban people.

The action that would promote both of these purposes is repeal of the present neutrality laws. They represent and blue American policy to the whole world. They handicap the activities of Americans and others who want to help the Cuban people.



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TO REFER to the Neutrality Act of 1939 by which Congress tried unsuccessfully to legislate World War II from our shores.

Today these neutrality laws are a mockery of U. S. policy and a liability in dealing with the kind of problem that confronts us in Cuba. These are the reasons.

1—The Act called Neutrality is a misnomer and a denial of the very heart of U. S. policy — which is not to rally the world to a head-in-the-sand neutralism, but to align as much of the world as possible behind the cause of freedom and independence. The whole Neutrality Act is a false stand.

2—The Neutrality Act contains provisions which prevent American citizens and the free citizens of other countries from working openly, actively and effectively to help free any of the captive nations, including Cuba.

3—Individuals — Americans and Cubans — who do have the ingenuity to lay hold of means to arrest the Castro dictatorship find that in actually furthering U. S. national objectives they run up against the law. They are immobilized and sometimes punished.

4—Unless we are going to declare war on Cuba — which we are not at this stage — the only way the Khrushchev-Castro regime will be overthrown is by unconventional warfare. Red China ordered "volunteers" into the front line in Korea. Khrushchev proposed to send Soviet "volunteers" to help Nasser over the Suez. Why shouldn't the U. S. permit American volunteers and those from the Latin American countries to help the Cubans recover their country? The Neutrality Act prevents it.

THE EXPERIENCED voice of Leo Cherne, chairman of the International Rescue Committee, which has done such valuable work in help-

ing countries, is being raised in favor of repealing all of these antiquated, inhibiting neutrality laws. This is good. From my reading of public opinion, the President and Congress could not take a more welcome step toward dealing with Cuba than to wipe the anachronism of neutrality from the statute books. I think many would be surprised at what release this would give to ingenuity and action and to the volume of volunteers who would be eager to join the ranks of Cuba's freedom fighters.

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